

14 August 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Blake via Mr. McMahon  
SUBJECT : MSAG Membership and Guidelines

1. In line with your request of several days ago, I have attached biographic profiles on members of the Management and Services Advisory Group. I have also attached the MSAG chart which was to have gone on the official bulletin board.

2. For what it is worth, I have taken the liberty of providing a paper prepared by [REDACTED] who covered the history of the Agency Management Advisory Group (MAG). It strikes me as significant because it reflects how MAG can be helpful to management if it is used properly, and if there is good "feedback" on proposals. John stressed this issue in a briefing of the Security Career Board in late 1973, and I feel quite strongly that the DD/M&S Advisory Group (MSAG) might be used in a more meaningful way, and that "feedback" (good, bad, or indifferent) is one very key ingredient.

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## THE USE OF MAG

The 1969 memorandum which established the Agency Management Advisory Group doesn't differ markedly from the 1972 Employee Bulletin which reiterated the nature, purpose and makeup of MAG. A comparison of the two papers would indicate that MAG has changed very little over the course of three years. And yet, in fact, MAG has changed significantly.

The change was not brought about simply because MAG membership has changed. The change came about because the way in which Agency management USED the Group changed.

Initially, communication between MAG and Agency management was largely one-way. Papers were written and sent forward, and there was little discernible reaction to the papers. This minimum feedback caused MAG members to question the value of the Group and its purpose. Several draft papers were produced concerning the abolition of MAG during the first twelve months of its existence.

With a change in senior Agency management, however, MAG became revitalized. MAG was asked to comment on items. More importantly, each time that MAG produced a paper or came up with a suggestion, there was feedback. Not that every MAG suggestion was accepted. But Offices which had an interest were asked to comment on the MAG <sup>PAPERS</sup> proposals. These comments were filtered back to MAG and formed the basis for a true ~~dialogue~~ dialog. MAG began to feel that it had an audience and was not simply talking to itself. The soul-searching over dissolving MAG began to disappear as its members decided that perhaps they were in fact making a contribution.

MAG has been used by management as a sounding board to obtain some feel for employee reaction. Again, under Dr. Schlesinger, MAG was used by the Director as one means of communicating with employees, of getting his messages down the line. This doesn't contradict command lines, but rather reinforces them.

In addition to its formal charter, MAG has an internal set of guide lines concerning the handling of information which MAG becomes privy to. Basically, these guidelines call for members to use discretion and common sense in handling such information. Information, ~~is not released~~ whether received in writing or less formally, is not released or discussed without the consent of the originator. This has encouraged candor in discussions with various officials concerning Agency matters. While seemingly obvious, it was worth the slight effort to reduce these guidelines to writing. Stating the obvious can sometimes avoid misunderstanding.

Whether a management group reports at the <sup>AGENCY,</sup> Directorate, or Office level, it seems to ~~make~~ be beneficial to have the group report to a clearly identified individual, rather than to another committee or group of individuals. Whatever approach is used, however, it is important for the group to have ready access to senior management in the component.

Insofar as the Agency MAG is concerned, it is recognized that MAG will occasionally surface matters which are beyond its capacity ~~in~~ in the sense of turning out completed staff papers. However, MAG can serve a function by merely bringing to management's

attention potential problems or issues which deserve ~~more~~ detailed study by more appropriate bodies.

In this area, it is well to emphasize that managers at all levels should attempt to use a management group to their advantage. Reports will be produced which may appear critical of certain activities or components. Managers should avoid the temptation to sit down and write an immediate rebuttal. Rather, they should look for ways to use the report. Are the comments justified? Can performance be improved? If the reports are erroneous, are there things to be done to improve a component's image? Are the component's activities misunderstood, and what can be done to relieve the misunderstanding? The extent to which a management group is used in this way by managers will dictate the extent to which it will be successful.

The nature and activities of the management group should be publicized and understood within the Office. This does not necessarily mean the wide distribution of MAG reports. That should always be a matter of discretion with the senior official to whom *the group* ~~they~~ reports. But the group should not become cloaked with some sort of secret, supra-managerial mystique or elitism. Its existence should be known; its membership should be known; and ideas or suggestions from all personnel in the Office should be actively solicited. Generally, its members should be chosen from those who volunteer to serve on it, who understand that they will be expected to contribute much of their own time, and who demonstrate a capacity for addressing issues which might be outside their normal work regimen. The Office can benefit not only by having

another independent body<sup>OF OPINION</sup> but if used well it can be an excellent training ground for future managers who will be exposed to some of the complexities of a modern organization.

Those who serve on the group should do so with the idea that they are all representatives of the Office, not of their particular components, even though each will bring to the group his particular experience and background. It is the exchange of ideas, the trading of expertise, that will help to broaden the members.

The internal workings of the group will vary as the membership changes. In fact, a new management group will tend to come into existence every six to nine months, depending upon the membership turnover. In the Agency management group, the ~~co-chairmanships~~ two co-chairman serve for two month periods, the chairmanships rotating among the members. Minutes at business meetings are usually taken by one of the upcoming co-chairmen, to provide for continuity and also to allow the ~~chairman~~ current chairmen to conduct the meeting. But these are largely housekeeping items which can be decided by the group itself, and should be subject to change depending upon the will of the group. Initially, to encourage ~~the~~ development, it might be well for management to suggest specific topics for the group to address. However, the group should be encouraged to decide upon topics of its own rather than just responding to suggestions from management. It will be the responsibility of senior management to encourage cooperation with the group in its quest for information and facts. However, in view of the fact that the line manager will continue to bear

the responsibility for day to day operations in the Office, members of the group will have to develop a sense for when and where to tread. The objective should be improved Office management, and occasionally more parochial interests may have to suffer.

There should be someone in the Office who can act as a management group 'patron', for want of a better term. This individual can flag items for possible referral by management for MAG comment. He can also serve to keep MAG abreast of current problems and issues which are of concern to senior management.

The management group's charter should attempt to delineate its areas of responsibility, specifically excluding employee grievances, the usual type of employee suggestion, and other items that normally should properly be handled within command channels.

If consideration is given to a marriage of the management group and the Long Range Planning Group, there is a relatively simple way to approach the problem. Each group should have its own written charter. Verbal directives and objectives tend to erode with time and become confused. A comparison of the written charters should make obvious the degree of overlap, if any, and indicate whether the groups do, in fact, serve distinct purposes.

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